

# The basic elements of speech



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BUSTER**

\* Speech volume, or how softly or loudly you speak, can directly affect the way a speaker is perceived by those around him. Loud speakers may come off as angry or overly passionate, and can potentially overwhelm or alienate listeners. In contrast, speaking too softly can make it difficult for others to listen, and can even indicate a lack of confidence in some situations.

Rate \* When speaking to others, rate of speech is crucial to maintaining audience attention.

Speaking too quickly can cause listeners to tune out, as the message is being delivered more rapidly than can be easily understood. Conversely, a slow rate of speech can bore listeners. Practiced breathing can improve rate of speech, and ultimately improve overall delivery.

\* Verbal pitch, how high or low your voice is presented, is an important tool for gaining audience interest. When effectively used, varying pitch through vocal inflection can be used to emphasize points or indicate meaning.

For example, raising your pitch at the end of a statement can indicate a question. Proper vocal inflection prevents the onset of speaking in a monotone, a lack of pitch variance that can cause audience boredom. Clarity

\* Clarity of speech is crucial for effective verbal communication. When speech is clear, words are properly pronounced with appropriate articulation. Slurred or improperly pronounced words increase the likelihood of confusion and cause audience members to negatively perceive the speaker.

Fluency \* Fluent delivery of speech is somewhat related to clarity, in that both involve the proper delivery of verbal messages. Fluent speech is smooth and follows an easy flow. Adequate preparation before delivering a

speech increases fluency, as ideas are organized ahead of time and can be effectively presented. Disfluencies occur when speakers vocalize pauses. Typical speech disfluencies include " um," " uh" and " you know. " When overused, disfluencies can become distracting to audience members.